

# COLD WAR OVERVIEW

Directions: Read the following information and complete the provided handout.

## OVERVIEW: WHAT WAS THE COLD WAR?

After being Allies during WWII, the U.S. and U.S.S.R. soon viewed each other with increasing suspicion. Their political differences created a climate of icy tension that plunged the two countries into an era of bitter rivalry known as the Cold War. The rivalry between the two superpowers led to many indirect (proxy) wars. There was never a direct military engagement between the US and the Soviet Union, but there was half a century of military buildup as well as political battles for support around the world. Tensions lasted until the break up of the USSR in the early 1990's.

## CAUSES OF THE COLD WAR

1. The Soviet Union was a Communist country, ruled by a dictator, who cared little about human rights. The USA was a capitalist democracy which valued freedom.
2. Stalin wanted huge reparations from Germany, and a 'buffer' of friendly states to protect the USSR from being invaded again. Britain and the USA wanted to protect democracy, and help Germany to recover. They were worried that large areas of Eastern Europe were falling under Soviet control.
3. The Soviet Union could not forget that in 1918 Britain and the USA had tried to destroy the Russian Revolution. Stalin also thought that they had not given him enough help in the Second World War. Britain and the USA could not forget that Stalin had signed the Nazi-Soviet Pact with Germany in 1939.
4. Neither side trusted each other. Every action they took made them hate each other more.

## HOW DID THE UNITED STATES RESPOND TO COMMUNISM?

Truman began a policy of **containment**—blocking the Soviets from spreading communism. Under the **Truman Doctrine**, the United States helped nations that were threatened by communism. The United States also adopted the **Marshall Plan** in 1947. This plan gave food and other aid to European countries to help them recover from the war. In 1948, the Soviets and Americans *clashed* over Germany. France, Britain, and the United States agreed to pull their troops out of Germany. They let the three zones that they occupied unite. But the Soviets refused to leave their zone. Then they cut off all highway and train traffic into Berlin, which was deep within the Soviet zone. The United States and Britain responded with the *Berlin airlift*. They flew food and supplies into the city for 11 months. Finally, the Soviets lifted the *blockade*.

## TENSIONS BETWEEN SUPER POWERS INCREASE

The struggle between the United States and the Soviet Union was called the **Cold War**. Many countries supported one superpower or the other. The United States, Canada, and several countries in Western Europe formed the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (**NATO**). NATO was a military *alliance*. Each nation promised to defend any other member that was attacked. The Soviets and the countries of Eastern Europe made a similar agreement. It was called the **Warsaw Pact**. In 1949, the Soviet Union announced that it had developed an atomic bomb. Three years later, both superpowers had an even more deadly weapon—the hydrogen bomb. Soon both nations were involved in an arms race. They produced more and more nuclear weapons and developed new ways to deliver them. Both sides were willing to go to the brink, or edge, of war. This became known as **brinkmanship**. In 1957, the Soviet Union launched *Sputnik*, the world's first human-made satellite. Many people were shocked. Americans felt that the Soviets were far ahead in science and technology. The United States then began spending huge amounts of money to improve science education. The U-2 incident brought more tension. The United States sent planes, called U-2 planes, to spy over Soviet territory. One was shot down in 1960.

## IRON CURTAIN

At the end of World War II, Soviet forces occupied lands along its western border. After the war, Stalin made sure Communist governments were in place in these lands: Albania, Bulgaria, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Romania, Poland, and Yugoslavia. This divided Europe between East and West. Winston Churchill called this division the “**iron curtain**.”

## SOVIET UNION CHARACTERISTICS

**Communism:** “An economic system in which all means of production are owned by the people

- land, factories, railroads, and businesses private property does not exist
- all goods and services are to be shared equally
- In theory there are no social classes- but they still existed in the USSR

**Totalitarianism:** Under Stalin the Soviet Union took control of all aspects of both public and private life

### Motives:

- Encourage communism in other countries as part of a world wide worker's revolution
- Control Eastern Europe to protect Soviet borders & limit U.S. influence
- Keep Germany divided to prevent them from waging war again



## UNITED STATES CHARACTERISTICS

**Democracy:** America is a democracy that has a capitalist economic system, free elections, & competing political parties

**Capitalism:** An economic system in which money is invested with the goal of making more money (profit)

### Motives:

- Encourage democracy in other countries in order to help prevent the rise of Communist government
- Rebuild European governments to promote stability & create new markets for American goods
- Reunite Germany to stabilize it & increase the security of Europe
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# COLD WAR TIMELINE

**Directions:** Use the timeline to plot US Leadership (first line), Events (2<sup>nd</sup> line), and Soviet Leadership (3<sup>rd</sup> line)

## INFLUENTIAL AMERICAN LEADERS

President	Cold War Tensions	Term
Harry Truman	Increased	1945-1953
Dwight Eisenhower	Increased	1953-1961
John F Kennedy	Increased	1961-1963
Lyndon B Johnson	Increased	1963-1969
Richard Nixon	Decreased	1969-1974
Ford	Decreased	1974-1977
Ronald Regan	Increased	1981-1989

Increased tension- highlight red  
Decreased tension- highlight green

## COLD WAR EVENTS

Event	Description	Date
Yalta Conference	With the defeat of Nazi Germany imminent, the Big Three Allies meet in the Crimean resort town of Yalta from February 4-11. Roosevelt, Churchill and Stalin agree to jointly govern postwar Germany, while Stalin pledges fair and open elections in Poland.	1945
Berlin Airlift	On June 24, the Soviet Union makes a bid for control of Berlin by blockading all land access to the city. From June 1948 to May 1949, U.S. and British planes airlift 1.5 million tons of supplies to the residents of West Berlin. After 200,000 flights, the Soviet Union lifts the blockade.	1948
Korean War	On June 25, North Korean communist forces cross the 38th parallel and invade South Korea. On June 27, Truman orders U.S. forces to assist the South Koreans while the U.N. Security Council condemns the invasion and establishes a 15-nation fighting force. Chinese troops enter the conflict by year's end.	1950
Sputnik	On October 4, the Soviet Union launches Sputnik, the first man-made satellite to orbit the Earth. In 1958, the U.S. creates the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, and the space race is in full gear.	1957
U-2 Incident	On May 1, an American high-altitude U-2 spy plane is shot down on a mission over the Soviet Union. After the Soviets announce the capture of pilot Francis Gary Powers, the United States recants earlier assertions that the plane was on a weather research mission.	1960
Cuban Missile Conference	After the failed Bays of Pigs invasion, the Soviet Union installs nuclear missiles in Cuba capable of reaching most of the continental United States. After U-2 flights confirm their existence, Kennedy orders a naval blockade of Cuba on October 22 until the Soviet Union removes its missiles. On October 28, the Soviets agree to remove the missiles, defusing one of the most dangerous confrontations of the Cold War.	1962
Vietnam	North Vietnamese patrol boats fired on the USS Mattox in the Gulf of Tonkin on August 2. On August 7, the U.S. Congress approves the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution, granting President Johnson authority to send U.S. troops to South Vietnam	1964
SALT Treaty	On November 17, the first phase of Strategic Arms Limitation Talks begins in Helsinki, Finland. The finished agreement, signed by Nixon and Brezhnev in Moscow on May 26, 1972, places limits on both submarine-launched and intercontinental nuclear missiles.	1969
Star Wars	On March 23, Reagan outlines his Strategic Defense Initiative, or "Star Wars," a space-based defensive shield that would use lasers and other advanced technology to destroy attacking missiles far above the Earth's surface. Soviets accuse the U.S of violating the 1972 Antiballistic Missile Treaty.	1983
Berlin Wall Falls	Gorbachev renounces the Brezhnev Doctrine, which pledged to use Soviet force to protect its interests in Eastern Europe. On September 10, Hungary opens its border with Austria, allowing East Germans to flee to the West. After massive public demonstrations in East Germany and Eastern Europe, the Berlin Wall falls on November 9.	1989

## INFLUENTIAL SOVIET LEADERS

Leader	Cold War Tensions	Term
Joseph Stalin	Increased	1924-1953
Nikita Khrushchev	Increased	1955-1964
Leonid Brezhnev	Increased/Decreased	1964-1982
Mikhail Gorbachev	Decreased	1985-1991

Increased tension- highlight red  
Decreased tension- highlight green